



**NATIONAL LEAGUE OF FAMILIES  
OF AMERICAN PRISONERS AND MISSING IN SOUTHEAST ASIA**

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**STATUS OF THE POW/MIA ISSUE: December 17, 2013**

1,643 Americans are still listed by DoD as missing and unaccounted for from the Vietnam War: Vietnam - 1,275 (VN-469 VS-806); Laos – 308; Cambodia - 53; Peoples Republic of China territorial waters – 7. (These numbers occasionally fluctuate due to investigations resulting in changed locations of loss.) The League seeks the fullest possible accounting for those still missing and repatriation of all recoverable remains. The League's highest priority is accounting for Americans last known alive. Official intelligence indicates that Americans known to be in captivity in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia were not returned at the end of the war. In the absence of evidence to the contrary, it must be assumed that these Americans may still be alive. As policy, the US Government does not rule out the possibility that Americans could still be held.

Historically, Vietnam established a comprehensive wartime and post-war process to collect and retain information and remains; thus, unilateral efforts by them to locate and return remains and provide records offered significant potential, and still do. In May, 2012, Hanoi responded to earlier commitments to provide long-sought archival records with relevant, case-related information, thanks to recent renewal of working-level efforts, as well as high level attention by the Departments of State and Defense. These and more recent actions offer real promise for greater success. Although first undertaken in northern Vietnam in 1985, joint field operations have dramatically changed and are now increasingly effective. Vietnamese officials are participating with greater seriousness and professionalism, achieving increased results. The process now includes both US-led Joint Excavation Teams and Vietnamese Recovery Teams (VRTs), led by Vietnamese and comprised of fewer US personnel. This formula allows a greater number of teams to "increase the pace and scope of field operations," as requested by Vietnam during discussions with the March 2009 League Delegation. Due to the increase in military-to-military relations, US Navy assets are increasingly allowed to participate in underwater survey and recovery operations. These steps, long advocated by the League, are now coming to fruition and are routinely raised by US officials at all levels.

Until recently, joint field operations in Laos were increasingly productive, even though more difficult than elsewhere. Accounting efforts have slowed due to recent Lao Government attempts to over-price payment for helicopter support and, until recently, denying permission for ground transportation to accessible incident sites. Laos is now showing greater flexibility, has increased the number of US personnel permitted in-country, is allowing ground transportation to accessible sites and has now renewed a business license to a foreign company to provide reliable, smaller helicopter support. Vietnamese witnesses are also allowed to participate in joint operations in Laos and Cambodia, when needed. This time-consuming, expensive process could be partially alleviated with fuller access to relevant archival documents, though Vietnam has dramatically improved working-level archival research efforts. US officials have worked with counterpart Vietnamese to ensure that all opportunities are pursued seriously, and results have improved significantly.

Research and field operations in Cambodia have received excellent support. One full-time Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) POW/MIA specialist (Stony Beach Team) works at the US Embassy in Phnom Penh. The Lao Government finally agreed to allow DIA's in-country POW/MIA specialist (Stony Beach) to re-engage in field investigations, but not yet as intended on a continuing basis outside of JPAC field operations. Two Stony Beach personnel have for years rotated on temporary duty in and out of Vietnam, collecting information via archival research and interviews of potential sources. Vietnam was long ago requested to give, and is still considering, permanent status for these two POW/MIA specialists, and the US Ambassador has strongly supported this important move. The US Ambassador to Laos has also supported full use of the Lao specialist. It is hoped that the expanded bilateral relationships with Laos and Vietnam will mean positive decisions are not further delayed. All of the Stony Beach specialists are sorely needed to augment the investigation process and facilitate locating additional incident sites for follow-up recoveries.

Over 80% of US losses in Laos and 90% in Cambodia occurred in areas where Vietnam's forces operated during the war, Thankfully, Vietnam has recently begun to be more responsive to renewed US requests for case-specific records on our losses in these countries. Unilateral actions by the respective governments, archival records research, interviews and field operations are the core means of increased accounting for missing Americans. Renewed working-level efforts may enable significant gaps in information to be filled.

**POW/MIA STATISTICS**  
**Live Sighting statistics are provided by the Defense POW/MIA Office (DPMO)**

Live Sightings: As of January 23, 2013, 1,995 first-hand live sighting reports have been received since 1975, none recently. 1,942 (97.34%) were resolved: 1,341 (67.22%) equated to Americans previously accounted for (i.e. returned POWs, missionaries or civilians detained for violating SRV codes); 45 (2.26%) correlated to wartime sightings of military personnel or pre-1975 sightings of civilians still unaccounted for; 556 (27.87%) were determined to be fabrications. The remaining 53 (2.66%) unresolved first-hand reports are the focus of continuing analytical and collection efforts: 47 (2.36%) concern Americans reported in a captive environment; 6 (0.30%) are non-captive sightings. The years in which these 53 first hand sightings occurred are listed below:

Pre-1976	1976-1985	1986-1995	1996-2005	2006-2011	Total
36	3	1	12	1	53

Accountability: At the end of the Vietnam War, there reportedly were 2,583 unaccounted for American prisoners, missing or killed in action/body not recovered. **As of December 16, 2013, the Defense POW/MIA Office lists 1,643 Americans as still missing and unaccounted for, 90+% of them in Vietnam or in areas of Cambodia and Laos where Vietnamese forces operated during the war. A breakdown by year of recovery for the 940 Americans accounted for from Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and China since the end of the war in 1975 follows:**

1965-1974	War years: (recently identified)	2
1974-1975	Post war years:	28
1976-1978	US/SRV normalization negotiations	47
1979-1980	US/SRV talks break down	1
1981-1985	1st Reagan Administration	23
1985-1989	2nd Reagan Administration	166
1989-1993	George H.W. Bush Administration	125
1993-1997	1st Clinton Administration	326
1997-2001	2nd Clinton Administration	53
2001-2004	1st George W. Bush Administration	63
2004-2008	2nd George W. Bush Administration	62
2008-2012	1 <sup>st</sup> Obama Administration	44
2013-	2 <sup>nd</sup> Obama Administration	

According to JPAC, unilateral SRV repatriations of remains with scientific evidence of storage have accounted for only 181 of the 640 from Vietnam; two were mistakenly listed as KIA/BNR in Vietnam in 1968, but remains were actually recovered at that time. All but seven of the 260 Americans accounted-for in Laos since the end of the war have been the result of joint excavations. The seven remains were recovered and turned over by indigenous personnel, six from Laos and one from Vietnam. In addition, three persons identified were recovered in Vietnam before the end of the war. There follows a breakdown by country of the 940 Americans accounted for since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975

Vietnam	640	Laos	260
China	3	Cambodia	37

An additional 63 US personnel were accounted-for between 1973 and 1975, a grand total of 1,003. These Americans were accounted for by unilateral US effort in areas where the US could gain access at that time, not due to government-to-government cooperation with the post-war governments of Vietnam, Laos or Cambodia.

**For the latest information, call the League's Office (703) 465-7432  
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